



Population in China:

6,965 (1990)
8,980 (2000)
11,590 (2010)

Location:

Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang

Religion: Shamanism

Christians: 30

Overview of the Oroqen

Countries: China, Russia

Pronunciation: "Oro-chen"

Other Names: Orochen, Oronchon, Olunchun, Elunchun, Ulunchun

Population Source:

6,965 (1990 census);
4,132 (1982 census);
2,709 (1964 census);
2,262 (1953 census);
Also in Russia

Location: *E Inner Mongolia:* Hulunbuir Oroqen Prefecture; Butha Morindawa Daur Prefecture; *W Heilongjiang:* Huma, Aihui, Sunko, Qike, and Jiayin counties

Status: An official minority of China

Language: Altaic, Tungus, Northern Tungus, Ewenki

Literacy: 84%

Dialects (4): Gankui, Biarchen, Kamarchen, Manyagir

Religion: Shamanism, Ancestor Worship, Polytheism, Christianity

Christians: 30

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

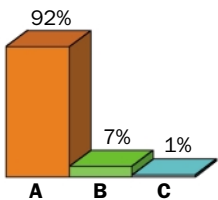
Gospel Recordings:

Elenchun #04774

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: ORH00

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity



Paul Hattaway

Location: Approximately 9,000 Oroqen are spread over a vast area of the Outer Xingan Mountain range in northeast Inner Mongolia and in neighboring Heilongjiang Province. The Oroqen population has been affected by rampant disease and violence during the twentieth century. By 1953 their numbers had fallen to just 2,200. Despite their small population, the Oroqen live in a vast area measuring 58,000 square kilometers (22,970 sq. mi.), "slightly smaller than West Virginia (which has similar terrain) or Belgium and Holland combined."¹ When the Hulunbuir Prefecture was established in 1951, 774 of the 778 residents were Oroqen. By 1980 the population of 410,000 contained just 1,315 Oroqens.² A small number of Oroqen live across the border in eastern Siberia.³

Identity: In the 1950s the Oroqen were granted status as an official minority group in China. The name *Oroqen* means "people of the mountain range."⁴

Language: Oroqen is a member of the Northern Tungus language family. The Oroqen and Ewenki are said to be able to understand 70% of each other's language.⁵ Some linguists consider the several dialects of Oroqen to be separate languages.⁶

History: The Oroqen were originally part of the Bei Shiwei people. It is believed that they broke away and formed their own

identity sometime between AD 420 and 589. A Russian invasion of the area in the mid-1600s, followed by the Japanese occupation in the 1930s and 1940s, drove the Oroqen deep into the mountains and forests of China's northern border regions.

Customs: For generations the Oroqen lived in traditional tents called *xianrenzhu*, which they cover with birch bark in the summer and deerskin during the bleak winters, when the temperature can fall below minus 50° Celsius (-58°F). After a death occurs, the Oroqen wrap the corpse in birch bark and hang it at the top of a tree to decompose naturally. The Oroqen are great hunters and

fishermen. Oroqen in some areas also raise reindeer. Today, due to the massive migration of Chinese to the northeast hinterlands, the Oroqen culture is being quickly assimilated.

Religion: Shamanism is the dominant religion among the Oroqen. They believe in an intricate system of demons and spirits. The Oroqen word for *shaman* means "agitated" or "frenzied" person. This name originated from the appearance of the shaman when he goes into a demonic trance to contact the spirit world. The Oroqen worship certain animals, especially the bear and the tiger, which they believe are blood relatives. They call the bear *amaha*, meaning "uncle" and the tiger *wutaqi*, meaning "old man."⁷

Christianity: Because of their reputation for violence and drunkenness, the few efforts to evangelize the Oroqen have met with resistance. In 1994 a Hong Kong-based ministry invited several Oroqen to work for them in southern China. Only one came; the rest chose to steal the train fare. The one who came was soon sent home after he threatened the other workers with a knife.⁸ In 1995 the first ever breakthrough among the Oroqen occurred when 30 accepted Christ after hearing the gospel from the newly converted Daur believers in Heilongjiang Province. Recently gospel recordings were produced in the Oroqen language for the first time.